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# DIASPORIC SECURITY AND JEWISH IDENTITY<sup>1</sup>

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This paper explores the relationship between identity and security through an investigation into Jewish diasporic identity. The paper argues that the convention of treating identity as an objective referent of security is problematic, as the Jewish diaspora experience demonstrates. The paper presents a new way of conceptualizing identity and security by introducing the concept of diasporic security. Diasporic security reflects the geographical experience of being a member of a trans-state community, of having a fluid identity that is shaped by sometimes contradictory discourses emanating from a community that resides both at home and abroad. In introducing the concept of diasporic security, the paper makes use of literature in Diaspora Studies, Security Studies, recent works in contemporary political theory and sociology, and Woody Allen's film *Deconstructing Harry*.

**Keywords:** Diaspora, Security Studies, International Relations, Jewish Identity, William Connolly, Robin Cohen, Identity/Difference

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## **Introduction**

Identity is important for any theory of security and there are various treatments of identity in security research. In Security Studies, the recognition of identity's importance came late, and was largely a post-Cold War "discovery." Debates about identity in Security Studies have tended to presume that identity, whether of groups or individuals, is spatially located in the state. However, the premise of this paper is that the state is not necessarily the primary political space that connects identity to security, even while it is within the geographical location of states where security and insecurity come to be experienced. What if there is another political space, a diasporic space, which is important for our understanding of how identity can be tied to security. This paper explores this question by focusing on the Jewish Diaspora, and of the various ways that Diasporic identity creates a non-statist framing for the relationship between identity and security.

Through Jewish Studies, this paper offers a contribution to thinking in Security Studies. Diasporic identity is doubly problematic for Security Studies. First, diasporic security poses a different type of security threat. Diasporic security is not quite the same as the status of migrants although the dividing line between a migrant community and a diaspora community can be unclear. It is also not the same kind of threat that we find in the category of societal threats.<sup>1</sup> In both regards, a difference has to do with the spatial dynamic of a diaspora and with the historical tendency of sovereign states to be suspicious of diaspora communities. Second, diaspora communities exist across states and, consequently, involve different communities that are joined in one sense to a shared identity narrative, but also live in different

sociological and historical contexts. Diasporic security thus refers to a trans-state space, but it also speaks to how individuals and communities find themselves faced with security challenges that exist across the traditional lines of spatial analysis. The concept of diasporic security is more than identifying a different level of political life. Diasporic security exists in multiple planes or levels at the same time, and thus it emphasizes a relational character among the various orders of political and social aggregation.

Central to the argument that follows is how the referent of diasporic security is always fluid and blurs any divisions between different levels of socio-political life. What may seem like a national threat or even a foreign policy issue can become a security experience pertaining to an individual's sense of self. The debate regarding "who is a Jew" is one such example that will be examined. Diasporic security involves suggesting a framework that problematizes a levels of analysis approach. The levels of analysis problem, whether in IR or sociology and while sometimes methodologically useful, ignores the extent to which levels are never neat categories, and in diasporic security, the importance of identity construction exists in (at least) two planes simultaneously: individual and collective. However, before proceeding it may prove helpful to briefly explore (1) the concept of diaspora and (2) how identity has been treated (or not) in Security Studies.

### **The Concept of Diaspora: an introduction**

The concept of diaspora may as well be an essentially contested one,<sup>2</sup> for providing a single definition of what constitutes a diaspora is quite difficult. Indeed Robin Cohen identifies at least four different phases of how diaspora has been

understood.<sup>3</sup> The first is the historical phase, concerned primarily, but not exclusively, with the Jewish diaspora. The second phase (from the 1980s onwards) used the term metaphorically. The third phase came about a decade later and was influenced by postmodern or post-structural thought and especially the conceptual possibilities opened up by theoretical study of deterritorialization. The fourth phase seemingly involves a merger of the previous phases, taking on board the insights from broadening the concept but came to emphasize the role of the home and homeland and uses ideal-type theory.

In the character of the fourth phase, Cohen identifies nine “common features of diaspora”:

1. Dispersal from homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions;
2. Alternatively or additionally, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions;
3. A collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history, suffering and achievements;
4. An idealization of the real or imagined ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation;
5. The frequent development of a return movement to the homeland that gains collective approbation even if many in the group are satisfied with only a vicarious relationship or intermittent visits to the homeland;
6. A strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history, the transmission

of a common cultural and religious heritage and the belief in a common fate;

7. A troubled relationship with host societies; suggesting a lack of acceptance of the possibility that another calamity might befall the group;
8. A sense of empathy and co-responsibility with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement even where home has become more vestigial; and
9. The possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism.<sup>4</sup>

A shorter definition is provided by Gabriel Sheffer: “Modern diasporas,” he writes, “are ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries by maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origins – their homelands.”<sup>5</sup> Belonging to a diaspora community means that one is, in the words of Sheffer, “at home abroad.”<sup>6</sup> However, diaspora communities are not necessarily the same as what others have termed “transnational communities.”<sup>7</sup> Part of the difference is in what joins a diaspora community as opposed to a transnational community. The primary difference is in what makes a diaspora a community, which according to Gabriel Sheffer, is its ethno-national character.<sup>8</sup> A transnational community could, potentially, be any kind of trans-state community, economic or political. However, one of the defining features of a diaspora community is in how the collective identity of a diaspora and the individual identity of its members are mutually constitutive. In the Jewish case, this nearly symbiotic relationship between individual identity and of being part of a diaspora is demonstrated in claims to Jewish

Peoplehood.<sup>9</sup> It is in this vein, that Sheffer is able to make reference to the ethno-national basis for diaspora.

A problem with these definitions, which is a problem for diaspora theory in general, is how far back one needs to trace the migrant origins, what is meant by origin, and what is meant by ethnicity. The problem of definition can make any account of diaspora politics difficult. Cohen's approach suggests ideal-type thinking but, importantly, this does not mean that he views diaspora as a static concept. Indeed, and crucially, he recognizes that diasporas are always in a state of flux, that diasporic identity is not fixed.<sup>10</sup>

Not all accounts of diaspora politics, however, take on board the extent to which identity is fluid. Of particular relevance here due to its focus on international relations and security is the work of Yossi Shain.<sup>11</sup> Shain correctly points out that, "Given their international location, diasporas are aptly suited to manipulate international images and thus to focus attention on the issue of identity."<sup>12</sup> Moreover, "Diasporas are among the most prominent actors that link international and domestic spheres of politics."<sup>13</sup> Importantly, Shain recognizes the socially constructed character of identity and identity politics. Nevertheless, he treats identity objectively. This treatment of identity is consistent with the main methodological approaches to identity-based research in Security Studies. Thus, for Shain, national identity is, "both a variable and a resource" that diasporas engage with.<sup>14</sup> While "diasporic distinctiveness tends to be fluid and more tenuous" diasporas nevertheless engage in national identity politics according to their interests as an ideational group to "ensure and sustain an identity that perpetuates and nourishes their self-image."<sup>15</sup> This treatment of identity as a variable requires identity to function as an objective explanatory heuristic. Moreover, according to Shain and Barth, political practices

(defined in terms of interests and power) may vary. The identity of the group, however, does not. The fluidity here is one of group strategy and not of identity-construction or identity-maintenance.

Indeed, diasporas often suggest that identity is objective and static, but this is a mistaken assumption encouraged by the political tradition of the modern-state, with its emphasis on a uniform, singular national identity.<sup>16</sup> Shain adopts this problematic narrative. He writes, “Concerns over diasporic identities and actions are mostly associated with the ‘threat’ of multiculturalism and/or dual loyalty.”<sup>17</sup> The presumption that these are threats functions only to the extent that a false story about national homogeneity is accepted<sup>18</sup> and that identity can be treated as an objective referent. Treating identity objectively enables identity to function as a variable, which means that it can only have one meaning at any given time. Diasporas, however, are both a product of, and a challenge to this way of thinking. Diaspora communities develop their narratives of identity and belonging by being members of at least two political and geographical communities at once: the state where they reside and their people or kin abroad. Diasporas are thus always both inside and outside the state in which they reside and hold multiple narratives of belonging and peoplehood simultaneously.

### **Identity in the Security Studies Literature**

Traditionally, security in International Relations (IR) and Security Studies was understood to refer to the problem of war and inter-state violent conflict. When identity was thought about in regard to security, the most logical place to look was in terms of national identity.<sup>19</sup> Consequently, the literature on identity was primarily



concerned with the security dynamics of the identity narratives of national interest. One of the more interesting developments in systematic thinking about identity and security was to shift away from this focus. This development is due to the shift in research topics in the post-Cold War era, and to the contributions made by constructivist, feminist and post-structuralist IR scholars,<sup>20</sup> as well as broader changes in the social sciences. As Bill McSweeney pointed out in a 1996 article, “Identity has been a fashionable preoccupation of social scientists for many decades....”<sup>21</sup>

In 1996 three important works were published on identity and security, McSweeney’s article being one of them. Another was *The Culture of National Security*,<sup>22</sup> and a third was Yosef Lapid’s and Friedrich Kratochwil’s interestingly titled edited collection, *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory*. Contrary to the title, Lapid’s and Kratochwil’s book suggests that not only is identity a concern in IR theory, but that it always was an area of importance: “questions of culture and identity have been always part and parcel of our analysis of the social world.”<sup>23</sup> Indeed, two years later in a 1998 article Michael Williams argues that the theme of identity has always been present in some form. “‘Identity’ concerns,” he writes, “have never been missing from theorizing about International Relations and security.”<sup>24</sup>

Indeed, in 1975 Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan co-edited a book exploring the importance of identity in politics. As they write in the introduction,

We are suggesting that a new word reflects a new reality and a new usage reflects a change in that reality. The new word is ‘ethnicity,’ and the new usage is the steady expansion of the term ‘ethnic group’ from minority and marginal subgroups at the edges of society... to major elements of a society.<sup>25</sup>

In this collection Donald Horowitz foreshadows later emphasis in security studies on the importance of identity and boundary maintenance. As Horowitz writes, “Political

boundaries tend to set the dimensions of the field within which group contact occurs. That contact, in turn, renders it necessary for groups to sort out affinities and disparities.”<sup>26</sup> Another example clearly demonstrating the importance of identity and of diaspora in international relations is the 1986 edited volume, *Diasporas In International Politics*.<sup>27</sup>

Ethnicity and/or identity did not become a core feature of the Security Studies research agenda until the post-Cold War era with the growth of identity awareness partly being due to the work of the Copenhagen School.<sup>28</sup> This literature, however, treats identity as an objective referent, sometimes a variable, of security.

Note for example this recent explanation from the Copenhagen School’s key thinkers. According Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde, “The organizing concept in the societal sector is identity.”<sup>29</sup> By identity the authors mean community, and a society is a “community with which one identifies.”<sup>30</sup> The main security issues in the societal sector involve migration and what the authors refer to as horizontal and vertical competition (horizontal competition is between identity groups, with the threat coming from either inside the state or in a neighbouring state, and vertical competition is when there is a power relation that seeks to impose a national-identity on the community).<sup>31</sup> Another possible threat is depopulation. Identity in this example is treated as an object. This way of treating identity is common in the Security Studies literature, and is consistently found in most of Buzan’s work, including an earlier text of which he was a co-author, *Identity, Migration and the New Security Agenda in Europe*.<sup>32</sup>

In a critique of *Identity, Migration and the New Security Agenda in Europe*, Bill McSweeney argues that the account of identity presented in this book is overly fixed:

In their view, identity is a property of society, not to be confused with human beings. It ‘emerges’ (a frequently used term) from the peculiar interactions of people and institutions in each society, fixed and incorrigible like the computer output of a complex arithmetic.<sup>33</sup>

According to McSweeney, Buzan and Wæver do not provide a robust theory of identity. Contrary to how Buzan and Wæver use the term, “Collective identity is not ‘out there’, waiting to be discovered.”<sup>34</sup> Indeed,

Who we are is not a matter of fact imposed on individuals who ‘belong’ to the society of Wæver *et al.* Their idea of collective identity as a social fact projects the image of a collective self to be discovered: we are who we are. The evidence and philosophical argument point more convincingly to process and negotiation: we are who we want to be, subject to the constraints of history.”<sup>35</sup>

Identity, as leading political theorists and sociologists have demonstrated, is not static and cannot be treated as objective but is rooted in difference and is fluid and/or contingent. Diasporic identity is no different.

### **Identity/Difference and the Geography of Diasporic Security**

As the leading political theorist William Connolly argues, identity is crucially tied to difference: “To confess a particular identity is also to belong to difference.”<sup>36</sup> Any sense of self is contingent on having some idea of the other, of being able to recognize difference. However, the construction of the modern self is based on a paradox: it involves the certainty that enables the self to exist as an independent and certain reality, but this certainty does not exist, or at least, not very clearly.

There are different ways to explain this paradoxical condition. For example, Anthony Giddens writes about ontological security. “To be ontologically secure is to possess,” he writes, “on the level of the unconscious and practical consciousness, ‘answers’ to fundamental existential questions which all human life in some way addresses.”<sup>37</sup> Ontological security is about having confidence in one’s own identity. Giddens recognizes that self-identity recognition can fluctuate, and in late modernity (to use his terminology) such changes are the effects of chance and risk, as opposed to fate and destiny.<sup>38</sup> The inherent uncertainty of chance and risk can pose challenges to one’s ontological security. Put differently, the uncertainty of life in an age devoid of enchantment (to use Weber’s terminology) makes any sense of a stable and unchanging self impossible. Self-security is necessarily contingent on the ability to navigate through modernity’s risks and chances. The modern self in pursuit of a sense of authenticity can find it in a self-reflexive mode of making political choices about where to take one’s life, and ontological security comes from the creation of routine.

William Connolly provides a different approach to the same paradox.<sup>39</sup> He writes, “Without a set of standards of identity and responsibility there is no possibility of ethical discrimination, but the application of any such set of historical constructions also does violence to those to whom it is applied.”<sup>40</sup> Connolly asks, “What if the human is not predesigned to coalesce smoothly with any single, coherent set of identities, if life without the drive to identity is an impossibility, while the claim to a natural or true identity is always an exaggeration?”<sup>41</sup> At stake in this question are the foundations of Western thought, traced in particular back to St. Augustine, that presumes, and perhaps even requires, that the answer to this question be that people are necessarily tied to a single coherent identity. The paradox, however, is that this answer implies that difference and/or otherness is bad, that it poses a threat, even

though any identity construction necessarily requires difference. Moreover, the stronger the identity, the greater the danger so that “a powerful identity will strive to constitute a range of differences as *intrinsically* evil, irrational, abnormal, mad, sick, primitive, monstrous, dangerous, or anarchical – as other.”<sup>42</sup>

The politics of self/other dynamics have been addressed in a variety of ways, but the focus here is about developing a theory of diasporic security, of how identity and security relate to each other in global politics. Giddens approaches this question by beginning with existential and psychological questions of human life in societies, and then makes the claim that the decisions people make in their life choices can have global implications.<sup>43</sup> Alternatively, Connolly suggests a focus on what he calls the slipperiness of identity:

My identity is what I am and how I am recognized rather than what I choose, want, or consent to... Identity is established in relation to a series of differences that have become socially recognized. ... Identity requires difference in order to be, and it converts difference into otherness in order to secure its own self-certainty... Identity is thus a slippery, insecure experience, dependent on its ability to define difference and vulnerable to the tendency of entities it would so define to counter, resist, overturn, or subvert definitions applied to them.<sup>44</sup>

There is always an uncertainty about identity – an absence of clear definable borders about where the self starts and the other begins.

This uncertainty is reflected in the geographical location of diasporic identity, of its simultaneous inside and outside character that contextualizes a diaspora according to multiple differences. The diaspora is not just a group with a sense of self constructed both individually and communally, it also exists as a location of multiple

differences: there are differences within the diaspora community, differences between the diaspora and the hostland, and differences between the diaspora and, if there is one, the homeland. Diasporas are others not just as a minority group in relation to the majority, but in some ways also among themselves and their kin in the homeland. These differences inform the spatial geography that helps define diasporic security.

Spatially, diasporic security is significantly different from traditional theoretical assumptions about security in that the geography of a diaspora makes it either vulnerable or threatening for a related reason: that a diaspora is always potentially at home in more than one place. Thus, for the nation-state, a diaspora could pose a threat because of ties that it has to its kin abroad, and possibly to a homeland. A diaspora community, however, is vulnerable in a similar way. An attack against one diaspora community is understood as an attack against the entire diaspora, regardless of where one lives or what passport one holds.

One of the core characteristics of diasporic identity is the sense of belonging to a community that resides in multiple states. There are a few traits that define diaspora, some of which are more important than others for understanding diasporic security. One of these important traits is that of belonging to a trans-state community. This kind of community is different from that found and identified in the communitarian literature, which is about a state-based identity. Diasporic identity cannot be explained purely by reference to the state. Anthony Smith's work on peoplehood<sup>45</sup> could suggest one avenue of enquiry were it not for his focus on state-based peoples. Nevertheless, his emphasis on the importance of constructing the idea of a people and of the acceptance of this narrative construction is important. Indeed, it is this narrative of belonging to a people that is so important for diaspora communities as it helps address the multiple differences that complicate the idea of diaspora

people. In the Jewish case, this narrative is especially important as it makes it possible to overcome the differences that frame particular Jewish communities and think in terms of Jewish peoplehood.

The relevance of the ideas of peoplehood, geography, belonging and security – and all in a Jewish context – are visible in a scene from Woody Allen’s movie, *Deconstructing Harry*. In this movie there is a conversation between the character played by Woody Allen, Harry Block, and his sister, Doris:

Doris: I'm a Jew. I was born a Jew. What... do you hate me because of that?

Harry: And if our parents converted... to Catholicism a month before you were born, we'd be Catholics and that would be the end of it. They're clubs. They're exclusionary. All of them. You know, they foster the concept of 'the other'... you know, so you know clearly who you should hate.

Doris: Would you... That's enough!

Harry: Let me ask you a question: if a Jew gets massacred, does it bother you more than if a Gentile gets hurt or a Black or a Bosnian?

Doris: Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes it does. It does. I can't help it. It's my people.

Harry: They're all your people.

Doris: You know what? Burt is right about you. You're a self-hating Jew.

Harry: Hey; I may hate myself, but not because I'm Jewish.<sup>46</sup>

This fictional encounter can be read not as fiction, but as an example that compresses many of the everyday political, sociological and even philosophical issues confronting Jewish debates about identity and security. There is something very telling about this exchange. It is true that for many people the communities that they belong to carry greater weight for their sense of values, duties, obligations and emotional commitment than does the general category of human being. As the philosopher

Michael Walzer has argued in a critique of John Rawls, it does not matter what anybody would chose to do, but “what would individuals like us choose.”<sup>47</sup> Allen is raising an important issue, and this is that a person’s sense of identity creates a series of personal commitments and attachments that outweigh others. Moreover, such attachments enable the ability to discriminate against other individuals as outsiders.

For Doris, Harry’s religious sister, she “can’t help” caring more for other Jews who suffer, even if she does not know them personally. This is a view that needs to be taken seriously. In his recent book, *The Crisis of Zionism*, Peter Beinart writes, after suggesting possible ways for American Jews to challenge Israeli policy of supporting Settlements, “As I write this, I cringe. When I see a Jew – any Jew – I feel a bond. No matter his politics, he and I share a people, a people whose members have often had little to rely on but one another.”<sup>48</sup> The fictional Harry, however, correctly points out the logical absurdity that there is no good reason to feel (more) connected to strangers just because one was born into that particular community. For Harry there needs to be something more that would establish such a connection and in the absence of this connection we should in theory all care equally for any other human being who is hurt simply because we are all human beings. He points out that Doris is able to know who she is largely by being able to distinguish the differences that her “people” have from others. Harry argues that the differences crucial to her sense of identity are exclusionary in a destructive sense. Harry, who takes pills, drinks a lot, treats his friends and family badly, and is addicted to sleeping with prostitutes, appears to be making the case for a moral universalism. Perhaps this is part of the joke. In any case, the exchange is important because what comes out of it is both the intractable nature of the argument (no agreement is possible) and that there are, in fact, good reasons to accept parts of either argument.



While Harry may have abstract logic on his side, and he is right to emphasize how practices of difference enable questionable practices of exclusion and inclusion, Doris has an empirical reference point to individual psychology and emotion. She claims to have a greater connection to her people, to fellow Jews, than to the abstract and general category of human beings, and there is no good reason to disregard her argument.<sup>49</sup> What is important here is that she is not making the argument in philosophical terms. Rather she says, “I can’t help it. It’s my people.” It is a shared peoplehood that draws her commitment, and this is not something that the philosophically minded Harry can easily refute. Indeed, he does not try to.

At issue here is not that Harry is wrong and Doris is right, or vice versa. The exchange between Harry and Doris centres not just on the question about what the foundations may be for one’s commitments to strangers, but also on the security connotations therein. For Harry, religions are exclusionary groups that enable discriminations that are, for all intents and purposes, random. They are not the product of rational thought but merely the accident of membership. Note how his argument is based on being born into a community, not joining one voluntarily. This is an important caveat because if you voluntarily join a club the element of choice and consent comes into play. However, if you are born into a community you effectively do not have such a choice, although you may have the choice of leaving and joining a different community.<sup>50</sup> But this is not Harry’s concern. His concern is with how exclusive membership enables discriminations that have both moral and security implications. He also, interestingly, seems to suggest that there is something fundamental about belonging to a community, for if membership is not important there is no problem here.

Harry raises two security issues. First, the self/other dynamic that he identifies is of particular significance in security discourses since it is generally politically easier to make the case to support people “like us” and to deploy resources accordingly. Harry is also correct to point out that the ability to distinguish others is an important first step for violent exclusionary practices, although he is wrong to presume that this is an inevitable outcome.

The second security related point is with caring more for “your own people” than for strangers. This obviously follows from the first point, and it is the claim put forward by Doris. It is necessary for a self/other framework to exist in order to then adopt Doris’ position, but what her position also suggests is that ties to peoplehood are important in a way that other political ties cannot address. The language of political philosophy is often framed by the opposing poles of either communitarian state-centrism or various global cosmopolitan universalisms. What is easily missed is the idea that there are other communities that claim our commitments. If we look at Harry’s examples, he reflects this dichotomy of either responding to a massacre or to a single individual human suffering harm. It is security, or rather the experience of insecurity, that drives his question, and it is the security of her people that is of greater importance to Doris. Doris would, presumably, be more concerned about an attack against a Jew in France than a stabbing of someone who is not Jewish in Manchester. She would probably read with great concern a recent article in the US-based Jewish periodical, *The Forward* about how the European Jewish Congress is “demanding a more proactive response to the recent escalation in anti-Semitic attacks around Europe, which its leader called ‘smaller tremors before a massive earthquake.’”<sup>51</sup> The article refers to “shots fired at a yeshiva in Manchester, England, swastikas and death

threats sprayed on a Jewish Agency building in Russia, a rabbi in France assaulted while riding the subway and Jewish cemeteries desecrated in Germany.”<sup>52</sup>

The article is evidence of the kind of security threat that a diaspora community faces, a threat that exists across state lines but which targets the same community. This situation raises some interesting questions. What is the referent of security in this diasporic discourse of identity and security? What kind of security is at issue in such discourse? What is the spatial terrain in which the security threats are perceived to exist? Are they local, trans-national, global, statist, diasporic?

### **Diasporic Security**

If diaspora may as well be treated as an essentially contested concept, the concept of security is not much clearer.<sup>53</sup> Almost everything today becomes a security concern. In addition to the usual physical threats that frame state security concerns, security is now also concerned with health, economics, technology, food, and of course, identity. What underlies most definitions of security is a reference to a threat, with greater specificity coming from the referent of security. “Security as a concept clearly requires a referent object, for without an answer to the question, ‘The security of what?’ the idea makes no sense.”<sup>54</sup> Objects of security, however, are also always subjects of security. Security, as Buzan notes, requires a referent, but as R.B.J. Walker argues, the so-called object of security is more like a contingent subject of security:

[To rethink the meaning of security] demands that the process of rethinking security must respond especially to questions about whose security is being assumed and under what conditions.... Consequently, also, interrogations of

security must contend with practices that are apparently abstract, practices whose concrete powers derive precisely from their apparent abstraction.<sup>55</sup>

To presume an objective referent is to misrepresent the political basis that serves as a referent for security. Moreover, once taken into the realm of identity politics, security referents need to refer to abstractions that have multiple meanings and implications. For example, it is conceivable that the same identity group will have different security needs at the same time in regard to different contexts, that this multiplicity of security discourses reflects the multiple political identities held by members within this same group, and that their security needs may come into conflict with each other. This multiplicity is crucial in recognizing the unique feature of diasporic security. In diasporic security the referent can also be the subject, the domestic the international, the local the global.

Diasporas exist as a recognizable identity-group in part out of self/other encounters between identity groups that are divided up geographically by modern nation-states. The diaspora exists as a minority because its identity is constructed in reaction to a majority. The national identity of the majority forms the other for the minority, while minorities serve as the other for national identity. Yet even within a diaspora group there will be differences that this national-identity type of thinking struggles with. For example, if we turn to the archetypal diaspora, the Jewish diaspora, the Jews' political history has come with the lesson that regardless of what differences may exist inside the community, they will always be treated as a homogenous group that could pose a threat because of their difference. Jean-Paul Sartre's work on anti-Semitism demonstrates the extent to which this is the case.<sup>56</sup>

However as Connolly argues, Sartre does not turn this analysis inward. The presumption in Sartre's otherwise brilliant critique is that it does not give way to how the identities of both Jews and anti-Semites fluctuate:

Sartre loads narrative weight on the absolute freedom of the self when discussing the anti-Semite and then shifts it to the situation in which freedom is enacted when discussing the Jews. The anti-Semite has freely chosen his self, and the Jew has been enclosed in a situation in which any choice of self is self-defeating.<sup>57</sup>

The point here is not that anti-Semitism and other forms of racism do not function in this manner, but that Sartre's logic does not provide the necessary opening to escape this self-defeating condition. The power seemingly rests not with the Jews but with the anti-Semites (once they change their minds). Sartre unintentionally demonstrates the great scope by which identity is treated in oddly static terms. Even when diversity and fluidity are underlying features of identity-politics, the tendency is toward an understanding of identity that views it as an object.

The example of diaspora could be read to reaffirm this kind of theoretical assumption. Diasporas seemingly function in terms of nation-state politics. They have a homeland, a hostland, and their identity-politics are defined by the challenges of belonging to both a nation and a state that are not in the same place. In modernity they are products of a Westphalian logic that allows them to operate only to the extent that they reaffirm both their national identity and their citizenship, even when nation and state are in geographically separate places.

However, the concept of the diaspora does not need to be read like this. Indeed, Cohen recognizes different ways of understanding diaspora in his typology, even though he favours retaining a state-centred account. An important example in the

diaspora literature that is not state-centred is with the idea of the Black Atlantic, a diaspora comprised of the shared historical experiences and repercussions of the slave trade.<sup>58</sup> The Boyarins' critique of diaspora provides a Jewish example. As they argue, the idea of diaspora challenges the geographical and national logic of the modern state by being "an alternative 'ground' to that of the territorial state."<sup>59</sup> This ground challenges the violent and static identity discourses of the modern state and emphasizes instead a kind of unavoidable acceptance of contingency.

Even if one insists on treating identity as an object, the concept of diaspora can suggest how the subsequent logical presumption that identity-politics would follow either a single voice or a single interest, representative of belonging to a singular community, is false. Even if an identity-group presumes to act as one voice, there never is one voice. Diaspora groups have different interests just like everybody else, but their interests involve the added complication that their identity is understood not just in terms of the immediate geographical community in which they reside, but also of communities of people who share the same historical narratives as a minority group but who live in different countries. Jews in America are different from Jews in the UK, but they both have important relationships with Israel because they are Jewish, not because they are citizens of either the United States or the United Kingdom. Jews in America also have more than one voice. There is a significant diversity of Jewish approaches to religion as well as to Israel.<sup>60</sup> To take one non-religious example, being Jewish does not mean that one has to be a Zionist. Moreover, even if one is a Zionist it does not mean unquestioning support for Israeli policy. The paradox is that the diversity of Jewish thought regarding Israel is either marginalized (both within and outside of Jewish communities) or simply presumed not to exist.

Debate certainly exists, but it is framed as a dissenting voice, when it is recognized at all.<sup>61</sup>

Why this is relevant for understanding identity and security is because recognizing how identity and security matter is to recognize how neither security nor identity can be objectified. Security is always tied to identity, and as identity is not a stable referent, but changes and is based on multiple encounters with difference, so too does security. Identity-based referents of security are necessarily plural and contingent, based on difference and otherness. There is no objective referent here, only multiple and contested subjects. The referents are not static, but constantly shifting, and thus if there is a referent it needs to be a referent of *subjects*, of movement, of difference(s). Security is, in other words, a fluid discourse that changes as identity claims do.

Most likely by accident, Cohen's typology helps to clarify how the identity and security dynamics overlap in ways that emphasize this fluidity. The Jewish diaspora can provide one illustration. The American and Canadian Jewish diasporas in particular are faced with multiple security challenges, the first being the assimilation and intermarriage rates. According to Cohen, the exogamous marriage rate in the United States is around 52%.<sup>62</sup> Clearly, this situation poses an existential security threat to the Jewish people, and in fact this threat of assimilation was a constant refrain in Arthur Herzberg's important book, *Being Jewish in America*.<sup>63</sup> However, J.J. Goldberg points out that whether this situation is threatening or not depends on how one defines Jewish identity. It may, he points out, threaten the traditional idea of being Jewish as involving regular synagogue attendance, but not in other ways of demonstrating Jewish identity.<sup>64</sup> If, however, we accept Herzberg's argument the threat is not just an existential one, but could also potentially lead to a reduced ability

to defend Jewish communities from anti-Semitism. The risks posed by dwindling Jewish numbers also play into the ideological narrative of Zionism. According to this narrative, the homeland of the Jews is in Israel, and only in Israel will Jews be safe from persecution and assimilation, and be able to protect the future of the Jewish people. Consequently, in order to prevent significant and potentially disastrous reduction of Jews, it is crucial, at least, to support the Jewish State of Israel. Ideally, the Zionist argument would support Jewish immigration into Israel. Alternatively, if we start with Goldberg instead of Herzberg, what becomes clear is how Jewish identity changes and so, consequently, will our understanding of what constitutes a threat to the Jewish people.

One issue of relevance here is what it means to be a Jew. Is being Jewish contingent on synagogue attendance, JCC involvement, or donations to community Jewish organizations? Is it in lobbying on behalf of Israel or perhaps some other form of Israel-centred activity? This last question is especially pertinent as it can highlight the question of not only what it means to a Jew in the age of Israel, but also of who is a Jew. Indeed, Israeli immigration policy is closely linked to this identity question. Consequently, what began as a demographic question for diaspora Jews becomes a question relevant to political and theological debates about individual and collective identity that, in turn, are wielded into debates of an international nature pertaining to what it means to support Israel.

Notice how a great variety of issues come to bear on this identity-security issue. There is no fixed identity here. Indeed, the “who is a Jew debate” is so contentious in large part because it demands that identity be fixed, that religious identity becomes exclusively defined according to internal religious laws (although even here there is little agreement – for example, Orthodox Jewry in the UK will not



recognize some Orthodox conversions from other countries, including Israel) set by one Jewish community in Israel that clearly does not have authority over many Jewish lives. Moreover, the security issues at stake here, Israel, Jewish identity, Jewish communities, will have different ways of (1) framing the security issues at stake and (2) developing responses to these security issues.

A strong example of these dynamics is the recent debate in the United States surrounding J-Street. J-Street is a political lobby group that holds at its ideological core a two-state solution to the conflict. J-Street has been attacked by the Israeli ambassador to the United States, viewing it as a “unique problem.”<sup>65</sup> J-Street certainly represents a sizeable portion of American Jewry, but it has come under attack by some in Israel and in the United States because of a deep resistance to opening up a debate on the highly contentious issue of Israel’s security. In this case, the diaspora voice is recognized, provided that it fits into the policy agenda of the Israel government. My point here is not about which positions are correct in regard to diaspora/Israel relations. The point is that there is considerable debate and complexity about how security dynamics of diaspora Jewry are framed and responded to. To presume that there is any objective referent here is ludicrous. What exists are diverse groups of Jews who are in the process of asserting their sense of self in response to a variety of forces, including domestic political structures, internal theological debates, personal issues regarding religion, state and citizenship, and normative concerns over international affairs and violent conflict. To locate any objective referent in any of this that could then describe a Jewish diaspora security discourse would be false. Rather, a more accurate portrayal would look at the variety of security discourses and of how these discourses emerge from, and reaffirm, specific but contingent claims to identity.

## **Conclusion: Self and Other in Diasporic Security**

Point seven of Cohen's typology addresses how a diaspora's existence is predicated on being recognized as different. Were the diaspora the main identity-group in the country, they would not be identified as belonging to a diaspora. However, as points eight and nine note, diasporic identity is also contingent on belonging to a group that has constituencies living in other countries. Consequently, the difference is both a domestic and an international one. Diasporas are recognized because they belong to a community that is not bounded within a state and that a sense of solidarity remains between these communities.

The idea of diaspora is not about location but about community, and diasporic communities may exist within state boundaries, and they have to function within the conditions that these boundaries set up but they cannot be explained by these boundaries. Consequently, the security dynamics that diasporas create and are involved in exist in multiple planes simultaneously. Diasporas may participate in the national politics of liberation (like the Irish diaspora has done) or in the practices of sending remittances home (such as Mexicans among many other diaspora communities). However, these are practical responses to a world divided up into states. The security issues at stake cannot be explained by states but by community and membership. Identification with their communities in the homeland enables practices that are designed to reduce economic insecurities back home, or even state security (as is the case with Jews and Israel), but the subjective referent of security is membership. Membership is enabled by belonging to a specific, different, constituency. The practices that reinforce ties to the homeland are those that involve supporting this difference, and thus involve reaffirming one's membership into

multiple communities. Diasporic identity is thus doubly different. Diasporas are others in the hostland, an otherness characterized by being a minority and having relations to the homeland and/or to people abroad in other hostlands, and they are others because they do not fit easily into the nation-state models: they do not live in 'their' state, they are always foreign even when they are at home.<sup>66</sup> A diaspora is tied to the place of residence, but also to communities and places abroad.

In this vein, the ninth common feature of a diaspora, as identified by Cohen, is that a diaspora is able to live a life as a member of a minority (diasporic) community and be recognized as such. Recognition is key. Consequently, the practices of solidarity that maintain ties with members who are either in other host-lands or possibly even in the homeland are recognized by the host countries. A diaspora needs to be recognized as a constituency that is not bound by state borders. How does security feature in this framework? First, diasporic security is based on how domestic and international politics are not distinct. Thus, any security risk for a member of the diaspora in any country poses a potential risk to all members of that diaspora. Second, diasporic security may either support nation-state politics or challenge existing state relations/boundaries. For example, diasporas may claim that their interests in supporting their kin abroad is actually in accordance with the national interest of the state where they reside. Alternatively, it may be that the interests of different state governments conflict with the interests of the diaspora. Diasporas may end up as promoters of the national interest or they might not and could contribute to instabilities in the homeland.<sup>67</sup>

There is, in addition, another fundamental question that emerges out of using the diasporic example and a theoretical approach to identity based on the importance of difference. The question is about how security always points in at least two

directions. There is the security of the group, community or self, a security understood in self-referential terms: what are our needs, my interests, etc.? There is also the security of the other, but this gaze toward difference is based on the simple dynamic that if 'my' identity is based on difference, then it is in my interest to recognize that the security of the other is crucial to my own security. In other words, I cannot be secure without the other being secure.<sup>68</sup> However, to argue that one's security is contingent on the security of others that contribute to the construction of my identity is only part of the security dynamic. For, paradoxically, and as Connolly notes, there is the potential for evil in the other, that the necessary difference may be necessarily negative. In this regard there is a problem, for it means that one's security becomes contingent on securing an enemy. Perhaps this is the base of what political security discourses are all about and why they can be so challenging. Appreciating the multiple identities that a diaspora experiences helps keep us aware of the complexity and contingencies involved in this paradox. Diasporic life is, as the Boyarin's suggest, a different ground.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> On Societal threats see, Buzan, et. al., *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* .

<sup>2</sup> Gallie, "Essentially Contested Concepts".

<sup>3</sup> Cohen, *Global*.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>5</sup> Sheffer, ed. *Modern Diasporas in International Politics*, 3.

<sup>6</sup> Sheffer, *Diaspora Politics*.

<sup>7</sup> Portes, *Globalization from Below*.

<sup>8</sup> Sheffer, *Diaspora*.

<sup>9</sup> Zeitlin, *Jews: The Making of a Diaspora People*.

<sup>10</sup> Cohen, *Global Diasporas*, 141.

<sup>11</sup> Shain, "Ethnic Diasporas and U.S. Foreign Policy,"; ———, *Kinship and Diasporas in International Affairs*; Shain and Barth, "Diasporas and International Relations Theory".

<sup>12</sup> Shain and Barth, "Diasporas and International Relations Theory," 451.

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- <sup>13</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid., 459.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>16</sup> See for example Tully's critique in Tully, *Strange Multiplicity*.
- <sup>17</sup> Shain, *Kinship and Diasporas in International Affairs*: 25.
- <sup>18</sup> Tully, *Strange Multiplicity*. See also Baron, "The Problem of Dual Loyalty."
- <sup>19</sup> Katzenstein, *The Culture of National*.
- <sup>20</sup> Campbell, *Writing Security*; Walker, *Inside/Outside*); Shapiro, *Violent Cartographies*; Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*; Krause and Williams, eds., *Critical Security*.
- <sup>21</sup> McSweeney, "Identity and Security: Buzan and the Copenhagen School," 82.
- <sup>22</sup> Katzenstein, ed. *The Culture of National Security*.
- <sup>23</sup> Kratochwil, "Is the Ship of Culture at Sea or Returning," in *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR theory*, ed. Lapid and Kratochwil, 203.
- <sup>24</sup> Williams, "Identity and the Politics of Security," 205.
- <sup>25</sup> Glazer and Moynihan, eds., *Ethnicity*, 5.
- <sup>26</sup> Donald L. Horowitz, "Ethnic Identity," in *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, ed. Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 121.
- <sup>27</sup> Sheffer, *Modern Diasporas in International Politics*.
- <sup>28</sup> McSweeney, "Identity and Security: Buzan and the Copenhagen School."
- <sup>29</sup> Buzan, Waever, and Wilde, *Security*: 119. A key work in this approach to security is Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear : An Agenda For International Security in the Post-Cold War Era*, 2nd ed. ed. (London: Pearson Longman, 1991).
- <sup>30</sup> Buzan, Waever, and Wilde, *Security*: 120.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>32</sup> Ole Wæver et al., *Identity, migration and the new security agenda in Europe* (London: Pinter, 1993).
- <sup>33</sup> McSweeney, "Identity and Security: Buzan and the Copenhagen School," 87.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid., 90.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid. See their response in Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, "Slippery? Contradictory? Sociologically Untenable? The Copenhagen School Replies," *Review of International Studies* 23, no. 2 (1997).
- <sup>36</sup> William E. Connolly, *Identity, Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox*, Expanded ed. (Minneapolis, MN ; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), xiv.
- <sup>37</sup> Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 47.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid., 107.
- <sup>39</sup> Connolly, *Identity, Difference*.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid., 12.
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid., 65.
- <sup>42</sup> Ibid., 65 (Emphasis in original).
- <sup>43</sup> Castells, *The Power of Identity*.
- <sup>44</sup> Connolly, *Identity, Difference*: 64.
- <sup>45</sup> Smith, *Stories of Peoplehood*.
- <sup>46</sup> Allen, "Deconstructing Harry".
- <sup>47</sup> Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*, 5.
- <sup>48</sup> Peter Beinart, *The Crisis of Zionism* (New York: Times Books, 2012), 192.

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- <sup>49</sup> This may be the time to raise the controversial topic about what kind of a people the Jews are. A few different and relatively recent works that address the history of the Jewish people, including explorations of Diaspora, are, Zeitlin, *Jews*; Biale, ed. *Cultures of the Jews*.
- <sup>50</sup> The literature on political obligation often addresses this issue. For an introduction to political obligation see, Horton, *Political*.
- <sup>51</sup> JTA. "European Jews Hope To Stop Anti-Semitic 'Quake'".
- <sup>52</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>53</sup> Steve Smith, "The Contested Concept of Security," in Ken Both, ed. *Critical Security Studies and World Politics*. London: Lynne Rienner, 2005.
- <sup>54</sup> Buzan, *People, States and Fear*, 26.
- <sup>55</sup> Walker, "The Subject of Security," in Krause and Williams, eds. *Critical Security Studies*, 69.
- <sup>56</sup> Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*.
- <sup>57</sup> Connolly, *Identity, Difference*: 103.
- <sup>58</sup> Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*.
- <sup>59</sup> Boyarin and Boyarin, *Powers of Diaspora*, 10.
- <sup>60</sup> See for example, Ben-Moshe and Segev, *Israel, the Diaspora, and Jewish Identity*.
- <sup>61</sup> A key collection that brings to light such voices is, Shatz, ed. *Prophets / Outcast*. See also, Beinart, "The Failure of the American Jewish Establishment".
- <sup>62</sup> Cohen, *Global Diasporas*, 107.
- <sup>63</sup> Hertzberg, *Being Jewish in America*.
- <sup>64</sup> J. J. Goldberg, *Jewish Power*.
- <sup>65</sup> Nathan-Kazis, "In Shift, Oren Calls J Street a 'Unique Problem'".
- <sup>66</sup> See Bauman's discussion in Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*.
- <sup>67</sup> Compare, Shain, *Marketing the American Creed Abroad*; Hockenos, *Homeland Calling*.
- <sup>68</sup> This dynamic is addressed by David Campbell and relies heavily on the thought of Emmanuel Levinas. See, Campbell, "The Deterritorialization of Responsibility." See also Lévinas, *Is It Righteous to Be*.

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